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Republican congressional leadership congratulated itself for leading nine "moderate" GOP senators away from a cliff and back to solid footing by persuading them not to vote with Democrats on a 1,924-page, \$1.2 trillion omnibus spending bill that has more pork in it than a pig farm.

Instead, most Republicans went along with another bill, which President Obama quickly signed last Friday. It preserves the Bush-era tax rates, but also perpetuates the cycle of debt and spending that contributed to America's current economic difficulties.

Rep. Frank Wolf, R-Va., voted against the measure, not because he wanted everyone's taxes to go up on January 1, but for more important reasons. Wolf characterized the deal struck between the White House and Republican and reluctant Democratic congressional leaders as a "handout," not a compromise.

He said the bill, which, if usual procedure was followed, probably was read by no one except the staff members who wrote it, contains hundreds of billions of dollars in new spending for such dubious things as ethanol production, railroad maintenance and Hollywood film producers.

The 2 percent tax "holiday" for one year on Social Security payroll taxes further undermines that program at a time when the so-called "trust fund" is headed for insolvency. If lower taxes are good for stimulating the economy, as President Obama now claims after recently saying just the opposite, why not make current tax rates permanent and reform the indecipherable tax code? Obama has pledged to do the latter while opposing the former.

The answer is that it would put more money and power into the hands of the people -- something liberal Democrats believe would weaken their influence and power.

Moody's Investment Service has warned that the tax legislation might jeopardize America's AAA bond rating. Such a decision would signal to investors that this country is less of a good credit risk. Wolf says the tax compromise deal will cost "nearly a trillion

dollars in borrowed money."

Senator Tom Coburn, R-Okla., said, "both parties have set a trap for future generations by our inaction, our laziness, our arrogance, and a crass desire for power. We are water-boarding the next generation with debt."

"The public be damned" is the attitude of the majority in this expiring Congress. Election results don't matter.

All that matters is what the lame duck liberals can push through bills at the last moment, often without hearings and with no amendments allowed from the Republican minority.

First Lady Michelle Obama wants to wean obese children from junk food and encourage them to eat foods that will make them healthier. Where are the leaders to wean us from junk programs that have caused severe economic harm and addiction to government?

Early next month, 108 new members of Congress will take the oath of office and swear to uphold the Constitution. The question is: which Constitution?

Will it be the one written by the Founders, which has sustained us for two centuries? Or, will it be the one that is being ripped to shreds by activist courts and out-of-control legislators who have concluded that grand document means only what they and the judges decide it means?

In families that overspend and are weighed down with debt, there often comes a "we can't go on like this" epiphany followed by a decision to reduce spending and be content with less. Not so with our government.

No matter the threat debt poses for our economic future, these so-called "representatives" largely represent only themselves and their interests. To channel folk singer Pete Seeger: "we are neck-deep in the Big Muddy, but the big fools say to push on."

Let's see if the 108 can lead us out of the muck and back toward solvency. Hope springs eternal, even at the start of a Washington winter.

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